

Entrepreneurs redefine SME business travel

 By [Ryan Potgieter](#)

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Jetlag, tasteless in-flight meals and 2pm hotel check-ins can hardly be considered hardships when you've been clocking 16-hour days to grow your SME business. In fact, you probably endure these challenges as a badge of honour - proof of your mettle as an entrepreneur who spends their life on the road to achieve business success. You know as well as I do, being an entrepreneur and frequent business traveller certainly isn't as glam as it sounds.



Ryan Potgieter, Flight Centre Business Travel Brand Leader

While the image of an exhausted or exhilarated entrepreneur burning the midnight oil to tackle everything from payroll and payments to HR and customer service remains to this day, you can be quite sure that the oil's no longer being burnt behind one single desk.

The modern entrepreneur does business whenever, wherever – from a coffee shop in Vienna over a slide of sachertorte to the reception of Supa Quick as you wait for your tyre puncture to be fixed.

Helping entrepreneurs and small companies with their travel so they get the most out of their trip is probably the most rewarding area of travel management today. As a travel management company (TMC), we get a real kick out of seeing how these companies grow through business travel and how we help them achieve this.

So, what's trending in the world of travel management in the SME realm?

Getting clever about savings

No matter the size of your business, keeping costs low is always a key goal. Even smaller companies are realising that to grow their business, they need to invest in business travel to expand their markets, not cut out travel altogether. The

question for entrepreneurs and SMEs is not 'can I afford to travel?', it is 'can I afford not to?'

However, it's important to be clever about your travel spend and realise that you don't always save money by scrimping on every component of your travel. The cheapest hotel room may not offer free Wi-Fi, which, if you had to purchase separately, may cost you a great deal more. The cheapest flight may not offer you the flexibility to change times or dates for free. And, as you know in business travel, you may well need to change your flight to make an important meeting.

Taking the red-eye flight to save on a hotel room the night before may save you in the short-term but could leave you looking bedraggled and not making the best impression when you need to be fresh to seal the deal. You get the idea.

Total oversight of expenses

Linked to keeping costs down is the importance of understanding what you spend on travel. If you're the type that keeps all your receipts in a shoebox and only opens the dreaded lid come tax season, it's time to reform.

Savvy smaller business owners are increasingly understanding the importance of keeping track of expenses on business trips and evaluating whether the cost of the trip was worth the investment.

The more immediate and overall oversight you have over your travel spend, the more informed you can be in planning future business trips and the better return on investment you'll achieve.

Kill two birds

Being a business owner doesn't mean you can't stop and smell the roses from time to time. If you're travelling long-haul for business, take a few days to enjoy your local or international destination. The bleisure – combining business and leisure – trend has been around for some time in business travel and it's not limited to staff travelling on behalf of large corporates.

Try to plan your business trips during off-peak periods so that it's affordable to visit the destination for a few days before and after. That context could be what gives you the edge in meetings with overseas counterparts.

Staying safe

For most SME business owners, the term 'duty of care' has had little meaning in the past. In today's volatile business environment, however, the obligation on companies – even small ones – in terms of their travelling staff is getting a great deal of airtime. Ensuring your travelling staff have the correct travel insurance and that you have taken as many precautions proactively as possible to secure their safety is your legal obligation, no matter how big your business is.

'Third place' working

You've probably been doing this for years but didn't know what it was called. The term 'third place' has been coined for

locations where you can work, that do not include home or your normal workplace. This could be a coffee shop anywhere in the world, a temporary co-working space or even an airport lounge. Business, more than ever before, is being conducted without the boundaries of 9 to 5 and the four walls of an office.

Today's entrepreneur often does not have an office – opting instead for the flexibility of a working environment that sees them in a different space every day.

It's an exciting time for SME business travel, and now, more than ever before, the travel industry is equipped to meet the demand for flexibility that entrepreneurs and SME's need to achieve business success.

ABOUT RYAN POTGIETER

As Flight Centre Business Travel brand leader, Ryan Potgieter leads FCBT with passion and great guidance to ensure they deliver amazing travel experiences to every single customer.

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